



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

March 23, 2023

Representative Rogers, Chair
Michigan House of Representatives
Health Policy Committee
Re: HB 4224 Supporter

Chair Rogers and Committee Members:

I am writing today on behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society regarding HB 4224. The National MS Society **supports** HB 4224, which would repeal a mandate for Michiganders to comply with work and community engagement requirements to maintain eligibility for the state's Medicaid program. The Society believes Medicaid work requirements jeopardize patients' access to care and have harmful implications for individuals with serious, acute and chronic diseases. We ask the Health Policy Committee **to support** HB 4224.

Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis. The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted, but advances in research and treatment are leading to better understanding and moving us closer to a world free of MS.

For many, including those living with MS, Medicaid work requirements can potentially lead to negative health effects. For those who do meet the exemption standards, they still face a burden of proof that may be cumbersome, complex and difficult to navigate. Individuals living with MS may face physical or cognitive symptoms that make following multifaceted procedures more challenging than it would normally be. This is a burden that means someone living with MS or a caregiver may be unable to focus on their health or the health of their family.

If someone fails to meet any of these requirements, they are at risk of losing coverage. The financial impact of living with MS is high. The current median price of brand MS disease modifying therapies (medications used in treating the symptoms and progression of the disease) is \$97,881. In addition to the cost of medications, people with MS can require costly visits to the doctor, hospital or specialists. To lose coverage in the middle of treatment would have a disastrous effect on an individual's physical and emotional health, as well as their financial well-being.

The vast majority of individuals with Medicaid coverage who can work do so. Nearly 8 in 10 non-disabled adults with coverage live in working families and nearly 60 percent are working themselves. Of those not working, more than one-third reported that illness or a disability was the primary reason,



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28 percent reported that they were taking care of home or family, and 18 percent were in school. In a study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, experts looked at the employment status and characteristics of Michigan's Medicaid enrollees. The study found that about one quarter were unemployed and, of these one quarter of enrollees, two thirds reported having a chronic physical condition and one quarter reported having a mental or physical condition that interfered with their ability to work.

The current law runs contrary to the core mission of Medicaid, which is to provide health coverage to low-income people so that they can get the health care services they need. The National MS Society urges that this committee support HB 4224, which would repeal the current statutes imposing work requirements. The state of Michigan and this legislative body has an obligation to assist and protect its residents, including those living with MS. **I ask you to vote yes on HB 4224.**

Sincerely,

Corbin McGhee
Director, Advocacy and Activist Engagement
National MS Society